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**LAND REFORM  
IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA**







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By Dr. J. KOŤATKO

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## THE FIRST CZECHOSLOVAK LAND REFORM

To treat this subject in the right historical sequence, one must begin with a question about land reform in Czechoslovakia, which is often asked abroad.

If shortly after the formation of Czechoslovakia in 1919, a radical and almost revolutionary land reform bill was promulgated, if there were almost 20 years, until Munich, in which to carry out this land reform uninterrupted in an atmosphere of pre-war parliamentary democracy, why did Czechoslovakia deem it necessary, immediately after her liberation from the Nazi aggressors, to make far-reaching changes in the ownership of land by a second land reform? There are two points to be remembered.

Despite the relatively sound legal basis of the first land reform, and despite the twenty years of its implementation, it was never completely carried out, and in fact its structure suffered considerable modification.

Then, too, the first land reform was directed by economic motives; if it had been consistently implemented, some limited aims of a national character would also have been achieved indirectly, but the country was not faced with such a fundamental problem as the solution of the German and to some extent the Hungarian minority question, so urgent after the experiences of six years of German occupation.

Thus the liberated Czechoslovak Republic was again in 1945 confronted with the necessity for land reform as a matter of the greatest urgency. Not only was the speedy completion of all that had been neglected during the twenty years of the First Republic called for, together with the rectification of all that had been tampered with, but a



new basic conception of land reform had to be formulated. This was necessitated by the confiscation of land owned by Germans (except active fighters for the liberation of Czechoslovakia), and aimed at a complete purge of land-ownership from foreign elements hostile to the Republic. This means that, even had the pre-Munich reform been fully implemented, a new land reform was called for. However, as will be seen from the following facts, the first land reform was far from completion.

After its foundation in 1918, the Czechoslovak Republic covered an area of 140,000 square kilometres, or 14 million hectares of land. Of this area, about 13.5 million hectares was arable agricultural land or cultivated forest land. The Confiscation Law of April 1919 specified that land in excess of 150 hectares of agricultural or 250 hectares of both agricultural and forest land owned by one individual would be subject to the coming land reform, irrespective of nationality. After a list of all land to be confiscated had been drawn up it was found that there were altogether 2,000 big landowners, who owned between them 4 million hectares of land, which meant that they dominated almost a third of all land in the Czechoslovak Republic. About 90 per cent of these big landowners were German or Hungarian, practically all of them members of the old Austro-Hungarian aristocracy. The average holdings of these big landowners amounted to about 2,000 hectares; they never fell below the 250 hectare limit, and in several cases reached enormous figures like 100,000 and even 200,000 hectares. (Lichtenstein, Schwarzenberg, Andrássy). As far as the geographical situation of the land to be confiscated was concerned, along the Czechoslovak frontiers with Germany, Austria and Hungary it formed huge interconnected areas, covering entire districts and regions of strategically important border country.

According to the First Land Reform Bill, every landowner affected by confiscation was to have retained 150 hectares of agricultural land or 250 hectares of all kinds



of land, i.e. the maximum holding not subject to confiscation. The uncompromising implementation of this law would have meant the freeing of the huge area of 3.5 million hectares for distribution among new owners, and only about 500,000 hectares would have been left in the hands of the 2,000 owners affected by confiscation (250 hectares each). This would have meant a reduction of the former area of the big estates to one eighth of its size. In this way the practical liquidation of the large mediaeval, feudal and entailed estates could have been carried out. These estates, being in the hands of a foreign nobility, formed an unnatural element in the economic life of the nation and, owing to their out-of-date production methods, were a serious obstacle in the way of capitalist agricultural development. An economically expedient division of the land confiscated from the aristocrats could have brought about a considerable strengthening of the peasant population, and could have supplemented in particular minute peasant holdings so as to make them into self-contained medium farms. From the national point of view the first land reform, if carried out, would have brought about an undefined yet logical undermining of the economic strength of the large estates of an alien aristocracy, hostile to the Czech nation and to the Republic, and it could at the same time have strengthened the Czech and Slovak national elements by settling large numbers of agricultural labourers and small peasants on confiscated German and Hungarian land in the border districts.

The first Czechoslovak land reform could have meant a great historical step forward in national economy, social and national development. The laws relating to the first land reform, passed unanimously by all Czech and Slovak political parties in the legislative, provided the opportunity for a radical change. The problem of land reform was, indeed, ripe for a practical solution in 1919. This is borne out by the fact that this legal interference with the big estates accepted unanimously by the entire Czech and Slo-



vak public, left and right, remained the only radical measure of a social and economic nature inaugurated during the twenty years' existence of the First Republic. It was the only point at which the principle of private property, which the Czech industrial and agrarian bourgeoisie was able to defend fully in all other sectors of national economy, was interfered with. It was accepted as a matter of course, that after the downfall of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the foundation of a Czechoslovak State, the land which had been taken away from the Czech people during the Thirty Years' War, after the Battle on the White Mountain in 1620, and after the termination of Czech independence, by the victorious German Hapsburg dynasty and their foreign generals and soldiers, should be returned to the Czechs.

It has, however, already been pointed out that the first Czechoslovak land reform did not fulfil any of the hopes placed upon it. The reform was not carried out in accordance with the legal provisions, twenty years later it was still incomplete, and even in those sectors where it had been put into practice its principles were severely tampered with. The following details demonstrate this.

In 1938, almost twenty years after the passing of the first Czechoslovak land reform, and shortly before the Munich betrayal, official figures published by the State Office of Statistics showed that out of 4 million hectares of land belonging to the big estates and included in the 1919 land reform measures, more than 2,300,000 hectares still remained in the hands of the former aristocratic owners. This is more than half, almost 60 per cent of the land earmarked for confiscation. Although, in accordance with the reform laws, a maximum of 500,000 hectares of land was to have remained the property of the big landowners, they retained in fact 4—5 times more. The prospective owners who should have got seven eight of the confiscated land (3,500,000 hectares out of the total of 4,000,000 hectares) only received a total of 1,700,000 hect-



ares, i.e. only about 40 per cent of the entire land earmarked for confiscation. These figures show clearly how gravely the law was infringed and how, even after two decades, a task essential to the successful development of national and economic life and especially of agricultural production, was left uncompleted and in fact sabotaged.

The 4 million hectares of land earmarked in 1919 for confiscation under the land reform consisted of 1,300,000 hectares of agricultural and 2,700,000 hectares of forest land.

What was the fate of the agricultural land, which formed the most important part of the property confiscated and the distribution of which was most eagerly awaited by the small Czech and Slovak peasants? First of all, 400,000 hectares out of these 1,300,000 hectares of land were left to the aristocratic big landowners. They had free choice and were able to keep the best estates with the best buildings and the most valuable and most advantageously merged landed property. This meant that 400,000 hectares of the best Czech and Slovak arable land remained in the hands of 2,000 big estate owners of foreign origin. Another 200,000 hectares of agricultural land were taken away from the big estate-owners, but instead of being turned over to working peasants, they were formed into 2,000 so-called residuary estates; each consisted of about 100 hectares of good and continuous land around the best buildings of the estates that had been divided up. These residuary estates were distributed as a means of political favouritism and by corrupt practices to persons who were often not even farmers; the decision rested with a clique of big estate-owners who formed the leadership of the Agrarian Party. In this way another 200,000 hectares of the best agricultural land became the property of a mere 2,000 families. If we subtract yet another 60,000 hectares of good agricultural land sold in big lots, by official consent, to all kinds of land speculators or handed over to fictitious co-operative societies covering up economically

powerful individuals, we come to the conclusion that only 640,000 hectares of the poorest land dispersed on the outskirts of the estates were left over to be handed out to the peasants; this land was divided up among 630,000 agricultural labourers and small peasants. This provided approximately 1 hectare for each family. The following figures are revealing:

	got: hectares of agricultural land	i. e. hectares per family
2,000 big estate-owners	400,000	200
2,000 residuary estate-owners	200,000	100
630,000 small farmers	640,000	1

If the first land reform was a complete disappointment as regards agricultural land, its results as regards forestry land were even scandalous. Originally, as has already been pointed out, 2,700,000 hectares of forest land were earmarked for confiscation; 2,500,000 hectares were pure forest land, and 200,000 hectares mixed forest property. After twenty years of operating the forest land reform, 1,750,000 hectares of pure forest remained in the hands of the German and Hungarian big estate-owners. This was more than two-thirds of the entire confiscated forest land, and together with the so-called "other landed property" it formed almost three-quarters of all the confiscated non-agricultural landed property. The State, which was to have had the exclusive right of taking over all the confiscated forest land, took over only about 400,000 hectares, which is not quite one-sixth of the confiscated forest land. Together with the autonomous regional administrative, the State took over about 600,000 hectares, which is less than one-quarter of the entire forest land earmarked for confiscation. The practical carrying out of the forest land reform was quite simple: the German and Hungarian aristocracies were systematically "compensated" for their loss of the greater part of confiscated agricultural property by being allowed to escape the confiscat-



ion of their forest land. This happened because big agrarian applicants were eagerly waiting for the residuary estates formed of the confiscated agricultural land of the aristocrats, and so were the secretariats of the Agrarian Party before the elections, whilst forest land to be given "only" to the State. Thus the forest land reform had to suffer. In Slovakia the figures were especially striking. Out of 750,000 hectares of confiscated forest land, 500,000 were left in the hands of the Hungarian big estate-owners. In Sub-Carpathian Ukraine, however, which was then part of the Czechoslovak Republic, record in violation of the land reform regulations was established; out of 170,000 hectares of confiscated forest land, 150,000 hectares were left in the hands of the big estate-owners. Let us imagine that out of the 250 hectares of land which was to have remained his property, every big landowner first of all selected 150 hectares of agricultural land, so that only 100 hectares were left for forest land. This would have meant that 2,000 big estate-owners would have retained a sum total of 200,000 hectares of forest land. In reality they retained 1,750,000 hectares, which is almost 10 times as much.

If we now survey the results of the first land reform of agricultural and forest property together, we come to the conclusion that 2,000 big estate-owners retained 400,000 hectares of agricultural land, 1,750,000 hectares of pure forest land, and 150,000 hectares of mixed forest land. This is altogether 2,300,000 hectares, or 1,150 hectares per family, against the legally permitted 250 hectares. For 2,000 residuary estate-owners 200,000 hectares remained which meant 100 hectares per family. 630,000 small recipients received only 640,000 hectares of land, or 1 hectare per family. The State received not quite one-sixth of the confiscated forest property.

Thus it happened that the mediaeval feudal big estate was not liquidated and that the huge and continuous frontier forests which were of great strategic importance, re-

mained in the hands of the principal enemies of the nation and the Republic, and continued to form an economic basis for alien, anti-Czechoslovak irredentists. No considerable limitation in the number of very small peasant holdings and no complementation to make them into self-supporting units was brought about, and the main working element of the peasant class, consisting of small and medium peasants, was not strengthened economically. Even the relatively small amount of land taken away from the foreign big estate-owners was not used according to the original intention and handed, in the form of small allotments, to the peasants. In addition the German and Hungarian landowners were paid large sums in compensation for the land which once upon a time they had stolen from the Czech and Slovak peoples. The small recipients, then, had even to pay twice over for the land they received.

In addition to this, there was another factor which later on proved to be more fateful than any other. The big German estates in the interior of the country, and the big Hungarian estates in Central and Northern Slovakia were at least somewhat affected by the land reform, but the big German estates in the Czech border districts and the big Hungarian estates in Southern Slovakia remained almost untouched, and practically nothing was done to settle Czech and Slovak nationals on the land confiscated there. Thus it happened that the German aristocrats' big estates in the Czech border regions became a bastion of the Hitlerite party of Konrad Henlein, and that in the same way the Hungarian big estates in Southern Slovakia formed the main backbone for the Hungarian irredentists. If the failure to carry out the first land reform effectively was of grave consequence for the economic and social development of the Czech and Slovak peoples, it was, from the national point of view, an absolutely unforgivable mistake.

From this short survey of the aims, implementation and results of the first Czechoslovak land reform it can be seen that the liberated Republic was, immediately after the re-



generation of its independence in 1945, confronted with the necessity of continuing the unfinished tasks of the first land reform, of rectifying its errors and mistakes, and of completing it as quickly as possible. This, to some extent, explains why it was necessary, after 20 years of the first land reform during the existence of the First Republic, to start with a new land reform immediately after the liberation, during the first months of the re-established Czechoslovak Republic.

There is one important fact to be emphasised in this connection. In 1918, when Czechoslovakia was founded, land reform was regarded principally as an economic measure, and the national aspect was only secondary; land reform in the new Czechoslovakia of 1945, after liberation from the German invaders, was aimed at the solution of a new and different set of problems. Now the main points were no longer the necessity of economic and social change, of regulating the ownership of land regardless of the owner's nationality, of a revolutionary development of the new land reform. Now the main problem was the wholesale transfer of the German population from Czechoslovakia (with the exception of the active fighters for the liberation of Czechoslovakia), the liquidation of German landownership on Czechoslovak soil, the national purge of Czech land, the national revolutionary period of the new land reform. Therefore, the decrees on land reform, drawn up in the spirit of the Košice Programme, accepted by all political parties in the National Front of Czechs and Slovaks, unanimously accepted by the Government and signed by President Dr. Beneš, leave, on the one hand, large-scale ownership of land by Czech and Slovak nationals untouched, even if this ownership arose from misinterpretation of the first land reform and its non-implementation. On the other hand these decrees mean the complete liquidation not only of German-owned big estates, but also the medium and small peasant holdings owned by Germans. They mean the liquidation of *all* German land-

ownership. This national revolutionary conception of the new land reform explains the previous assertion that a new settlement of the question of landownership would have been inevitable in liberated Czechoslovakia, even if the first land reform had been finished fully and on time, because in 1945 the interests at stake were not only agricultural and economic as in 1919, but the sovereign interests of the nation and the State.

During the six years of German occupation in the Czech lands and of Hungarian overlordship in Southern Slovakia the invaders even interfered with the scanty results of the first land reform. Czech and Slovak settlers were evicted wholesale from the regions of Southern Slovakia which were occupied by the Hungarians. In the Czech provinces Czech peasants were all driven out from the border regions which were made a part of the German Reich. But the Germans also did a lot of damage on the territory of the so-called Protectorate, where the German aristocracy, with the help of the invaders, took over especially their former forest land. Besides this Czech peasants were moved from a number of Czech districts where either big German military training grounds were set up, or where Germans from the Baltic, from Bessarabia, from the Balkans and from the Reich were settled. Thus the crippled and reduced Czech national territory was systematically infested with German settlements, it was cut into pieces by artificially created and forced German colonisation and in addition, before the end of the war, it was overrun by hundreds of thousands of German refugees from East and West. Therefore, after the victorious arrival of the liberating Red Army and after the return of the Czechoslovak Government from Košice to Prague, in May 1945, the situation was fully ripe for the immediate implementation of the radical, uncompromising national revolutionary aspect of the new land reform.



## THE NEW LAND REFORM

### A NATIONAL PURGE OF CZECH LAND OWNERSHIP

The new land reform was legally enacted in three decrees issued by the President of the Czechoslovak Republic and the Government, which were later approved by the Provisional National Assembly. This was followed by another Governmental Decree on land reform. The decrees concerned were Decree No. 5 of May 19th, 1945 on the provisional national administration of German property; Decree No. 12 of June 21st, 1945, on the confiscation and dividing-up of land belonging to Germans, Hungarians and traitors; Decree No. 28 of July 20th, 1945, on the re-settlement of people in the Czech border districts; and Governmental Decree No. 63 of September 3rd, 1945, on the institution of a National Land Fund, administered by the Ministry of Agriculture. These legal norms were published, as can be seen, very quickly one after the other, immediately after the liberation of Czechoslovakia. They are concise, simple and easily understood, they lay down principles for the solution of the basic problems, and later experience proves them entirely adequate to deal with the whole complicated legal and technical complex of questions connected with the liquidation of the vast German landownership in Czechoslovakia.

In this connection it must be pointed out that in the days of May 1945, after the capitulation of the German armies and the arrival of the Red Army in the Czech provinces, there were still about 3 million Germans left out of a total of 3,100,000 German inhabitants. These 3,100,000 Germans had been registered during the last census taken in 1930 in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. In 1930, then, there was a German minority in the Republic amounting to 23.3 per cent of the entire population, which is something less than a quarter of the entire population. The German settlement of the border regions of the Czech provinces, which began as early as the Thirteenth Century and which proceed-



ed from there to the interior of the country, bore on the one hand the character of compact Germanisation of entire connected districts in the border regions, and on the other hand the character of aggressive infiltration into the interior of the Czech lands. About a quarter of the German population in the Czech provinces (750—800,000) were engaged in agricultural production, mainly concentrated in Western and Southern Bohemia and in Southern Moravia. German ownership comprised altogether 1,500,000 hectares of agricultural and almost 1,000,000 hectares of forest land, which together meant about 2,500,000 hectares in the Czech provinces. Of this 100,000 hectares of agricultural and 300,000 hectares of forest land (400,000 hectares altogether) were situated in the interior of the country, while 1,400,000 hectares of agricultural and a little less than 700,000 hectares of forest land (2,100,000 hectares altogether) were situated in the border districts. From these figures it becomes evident that only 7 per cent of German-owned agricultural land and not quite a third of the German-owned forest land were situated in the interior of the country. This also goes to show that the German ownership of land in the interior of the country had the character of isolated islands, whilst in the border regions it had the character of continuous Germanised stretches of whole districts and regions. Therefore, the task of the new land reform, as far as the national purge of landownership in the Czech provinces was concerned, became identical with the task of resettling the border regions.

Let us now deal with some specially interesting problems of the national revolutionary aspect of Czechoslovak land reform. They are the questions of Czechoslovak agricultural resettlement policy, which has aroused much discussions abroad.

First of all, it is necessary to consider whether the wholesale transfer of the German agricultural population was an absolute necessity.



As far as the fate of the German national minority in the Czech provinces is concerned, before Munich all illusions of the Czech public as well as of the democratic public abroad, about an acceptable legal and national solution of this so-called "Sudeten German problem" within the framework of the Czechoslovak Republic had vanished, even if any solution could have been based upon the very small section of that national minority which had not been infected by Nazism. The policy of Henlein's party which gathered in its ranks the vast majority of all Germans in Czechoslovakia, showed itself in its true colours at the time of the Munich agreement and when the Czechoslovak border regions were occupied by Germany. During the war even the German workers proved a disappointment, although they had been relied upon to some extent, and even the democratic Germans—with very few exceptions—were swept into the torrent of war chauvinism and towards active support for Nazi aggression and murder. The hatred of the Czech people for the Germans as a whole and the German settlers in Czechoslovakia in particular, and their resistance, was already during the first years of the war very intense. After the Soviet Union had entered the war, this hatred took the form of a real fight for liberation.

The age-long struggle of the Czech nation against ceaseless aggression by German attackers reached its climax in the six years of hell of the German occupation and in the Czech patriots' road to calvary in the prisons and concentration camps of Germany. The result was a decision of historic importance: the unanimous decision of the liberated Czech people to be rid once and for all of the so-called Sudeten German problem, the decision to transfer wholesale the entire German national minority, which for many centuries had been the channel for German invasion and which had been a hostile Fifth Column along the historical, strategic and national frontiers of the Kingdom of Bohemia and the Czechoslovak Republic. This was a solution un-

animously demanded by the Czech resistance movement at home and abroad and by all Czech and Slovak political parties without exception. It was a solution accepted at that time by other Slav nations, by the Poles and the Yugoslavs, and which was pressed for and gained by the Soviet Union at Potsdam in Summer 1945.

Thus the age-old struggle between the Czech nation and the German minority, a minority which in the Czech lands had formed the vanguard of German aggression, was ended by an integral solution of the whole problem. Those who shouted at Runciman, Mr. Chamberlain's Envoy to Czechoslovakia at the period of Munich, that they wanted to go to Hitler's "Third Reich", have now ultimately been sent there and have no right to complain about their well-deserved fate. They have left behind the Czech lands, full of the blood and the terror of the Nazi murder gangs, land waste and robbed, worn out and weakened, but at the same time firmly resolved never again to enter any discussion about the "Sudeten German problem", solved once for all. Czechoslovakia in this matter is fully supported by the Soviet Union, the other Slav nations and all democratic countries in Europe and elsewhere.

There was, then, no other solution possible. The period of almost three years has elapsed since the historic decision made at Potsdam shows clearly that the wholesale transfer of the German minority from Czechoslovakia was entirely correct.

Let us now answer a very important question. What happened to the confiscated German land in Czechoslovakia? Was it socialised or collectivised, or was it handed over to private owners?

Out of the 1,400,000 hectares of German-owned agricultural land in the border districts, 1,040,000 hectares were handed over to individual applicants and their families as individual private, personal and inheritable property. 1,005,000 hectares were divided up among 125,000 families of agricultural workers and small peasants from the in-



terior of the country, so that every family received an economically self-contained unit of medium size amounting to about 8—9 hectares of land, whilst 35,000 hectares were divided up among further 30,000 applicants as building sites, allotments or small-holdings. This means that 75 per cent of the confiscated German agricultural property was distributed among private owners.

There are a further 230,000 hectares of confiscated German agricultural land; this includes 75,000 hectares not yet resettled and held as a reserve for Czech and Slovak agricultural workers who are still returning from abroad; in addition there are 50,000 hectares of poor land which has been earmarked for gradual afforestation; and 105,000 hectares of land which is to be used for various purposes in the public interest, the building of railways, roads, foot-paths, dams, power stations, industrial plants, military training camps, aerodromes, mines, etc. This means that in this category, too, comprising more than 15 per cent of the confiscated German agricultural land in the border districts, no land has been socialised or collectivised, and that therefore on 90 per cent of the entire land taken over in the border districts no sovkhoses or kolkhoses were formed.

There still remain the 100,000 hectares of agricultural land used for the setting up of highland pasture co-operatives based upon the Swiss model. These are sometimes, as a result of misinformation or more often of ill-will, described as collective farms. What has actually happened to this land, which covers less than 10 per cent of the entire confiscated German landed property in the border districts?

If we look at a physical map of Czechoslovakia, we will see that the Czech provinces have an ideal natural frontier, because they are surrounded on almost all sides by steep mountain ranges. The land there reaches as high as 5,300 feet above sea-level; it is mainly covered by forests, and where arable land is found there it is of the poorest kind, on steep and stony slopes, where machine ploughs cannot

be used, where sowing has to be done exclusively by hand, and where manuring and the use of fertilisers is almost impossible. The majority of these small fields, hemmed in by forests, were used for pasture.

After the transfer of the Germans the question of utilising this land arose. It was impossible to plan individual resettlement there, because Czech agricultural workers from the fertile plains of the country's interior would refuse to settle in such poor and remote districts; they could settle on German-owned land in more fertile and richer regions lower down, or could get well-paid employment in the industries of the border districts. There was, of course, the possibility of using these unattractive holdings in the mountain districts as State-owned estates, but this would have meant the loss of 130,000 hectares of land to the sector of individual peasant economy. Therefore, after careful consideration and with the unanimous consent of a wide circle of experts, it was decided to reorientate these unsettled parts of the mountainous regions from crop-farming to animal breeding, to convert the unfertile fields into continuous stretches of artificial pasture and to hand over the use of the various large complexes of pasture land thus gained to the Mountain Pasture Co-operatives.

These Mountain Pasture Co-operatives have, however, nothing whatever in common with the Soviet form of collective farm, as can be plainly seen from their organisation. The peasants in any district in the interior of the country irrespective of the size of their holdings, from small-holders to estate-owners, form a Pasture Co-operative based upon the regulations issued by the Ministry of Agriculture. Individual farmers, who join the Co-operative, pay down their membership share at once or in instalments, and the committee of the Co-operative is elected on democratic principles. The Ministry of Agriculture then hands over to such a properly constituted Pasture Co-operative a certain sector of uninhabited land in the mountainous regions of the border districts. According to the number of members



in the Co-operative, the land will vary from several hundred to several thousand hectares. The Co-operative management is concerned only with these mountain pastures, and affects in no way the personal, private farming of the individual members of the Co-operative in the interior of the country. This means that by joining a Pasture Co-operative the farmer does not commit himself to anything affecting his own holding, and he takes part in the co-operative pasture enterprise only to the extent of his deposited shares. In a way, then, the share of a peasant in a Mountain Pasture Co-operative means an enlargement of his own farm's economy, for it means a supplement to his livestock breeding. In the Mountain Pasture Co-operative the breeding of first-class cattle is carried on, as well as the rearing of young cattle sent there by the peasant members of the Co-operative for the summer. Here, too, fodder for the cattle on the mountain pastures is produced and even for members' farms in the interior of the country.

This, then, should give a clear picture of what this kind of co-operative enterprise means. The privately owned farms of the peasant members of the Co-operative remain entirely untouched, and their stock breeding is helped by the common enterprise on the mountain pastures. This type of peasant co-operation can be also found, as has already been said, in purely capitalist countries, like Switzerland, where there is a highly intensified agricultural production but it cannot, of course, be found in the Soviet Union, where peasant holdings have become part of the collective farms with all their land, their machinery, their cattle and the large farm buildings.

The Mountain Pasture Co-operatives in Czechoslovakia have already brought about a satisfactory solution of the difficult problem of resettling remote and second-rate mountain land. From the point of view of defence they are a suitable type of settlement for the districts along the borders, where now on large complex pastures there are very few inhabitants and almost no vulnerable production

or transport centres. From the economic point of view they are a considerable aid to the production of live-stock, upon the development of which the prosperity of 69 per cent of the Czechoslovak farms depend. Also from the point of view of the economical use of manpower these Co-operatives are a very suitable form of settlement, because on their entire surface of 130,000 hectares, divided up among 100 Co-operatives, 10,000 workers are sufficient, and even less will be needed after improvements of organisation and mechanisation have been effected; 10—15,000 peasant families (30—50,000 people) would have been necessary for individual resettlement of such an area. Finally, these Mountain Pasture Co-operatives are undoubtedly a progressive and educative form of agricultural production, because they teach farmers how to intensify and highly specialise agricultural work under very favourable conditions. The Pasture Co-operative gets its land from the National Land Fund on a 15 years' lease for the lowest possible sum and in addition, the National Land Fund accords the Co-operatives favourable credits for investments and running expenses. The fund helps to build model sheds, silos and other farm buildings, and sends out highclass breeding cattle, cheap machinery, fertilisers, grass-seeds, building timber, etc.

The work of the Mountain Pasture Co-operatives is not easy, because the districts in which they are situated are remote and the land is poor. It is also necessary to overcome a considerable shortage of manpower in these districts, and numbers of pasture experts must now be trained, because Czechoslovakia has not previously needed them.

As far as real agricultural production Co-operatives are concerned, there are almost none in Czechoslovakia, although the decree relating to the resettlement of the border districts gave, in a democratic manner, the full possibility of forming such Co-operatives. In the Czech provinces there are not even ten agricultural production Co-operatives, and those which exist, covering an acreage of 2,000 hectares



of arable land altogether, thus comprise about a tenth of one per cent of all confiscated German agricultural land. Although the political situation in the summer of 1945 was very favourable to revolutionary economic changes,—for the masses of the people had become radical, in the border districts huge and continuous areas of confiscated land belonging to nobody were available and the initiative of the new agricultural policy was firmly in the hands of the Communist Party—it can be clearly seen from the facts and figures mentioned above that the national revolutionary aspect of the new Czechoslovak land reform did not entail the socialisation or collectivisation of the land confiscated. It was, on the contrary, characterised by the formation of numerous medium peasant holdings and by the supplementation of very small holdings, so that it remained firmly based on individual landownership and private property relations.

Of 122,000 families settled on independent holdings in the border regions, 8,047, i.e., a little over 6 p.c., are the families of serving or demobilised soldiers. These fall into several groups: 3,320 have returned from fighting with Czechoslovak forces abroad (of these, 536 are Czechs and Slovaks from this country, 2,468 are re-immigrants from Volynia, and 496 are Ukrainians); 628 are former members of partisan formations (355 from Czechoslovakia, 273 Czechs and Slovaks from Yugoslavia); 4,099 are members of the Czechoslovak forces at home, both those who are at present on national service or waiting to be called up, and those who have been demobilised on completion of service. The total proportion of civilian to military settlers, therefore is 114,000 civilian (10 p.c.) to 8,000 military (6 p.c.)—of these latter, however, only one half, or 3 p.c., can be called military persons in the proper sense of the word. Even this insignificant percentage of military persons is scattered over more than 50 districts in the border regions, and thus tends to disappear completely among the overwhelming mass of the civilian population.

The total number of civilian families repatriated from abroad, is 8,000; of these, 5,500 are Czechs repatriated from Volynia, 1,000 are Czechs repatriated from Poland, the rest are small groups from other countries: Austria, Hungary, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, France, Canada, USA, etc. Adding the civilian and military totals given above, we find that Czech nationals, whether military or civilians, repatriated from abroad account for about 10,000 families, or one tenth of all agricultural settlers in the border regions.

It may be fitting to mention here that among the agricultural settlers in the border regions are a fair number of families from the Eastern part of Czechoslovakia, Slovakia. These, numbering approximately 8,200, have found a permanent home in the Bohemian mountains, being drawn hither by better farming and marketing conditions and by the shortage of land in Slovakia, due to delays in the carrying out of the land reform and the redistribution of confiscated Hungarian land. Summing up the whole position we can say that Czech military and civilian re-immigrants together with Slovak settlers account for about 20,000 families, whereas over 100,000 families came to the border districts from the agricultural regions in the interior of Bohemia. The resettlement of the border regions is thus seen to be the achievement almost entirely of Czech settlers from Bohemia.

#### CONFISCATED GERMAN HOLDINGS IN THE INTERIOR OF BOHEMIA

Approximately 100,000 hectares of German land property were confiscated in the interior of Bohemia. These German holdings were of two kinds: small, scattered settlements, German farming villages in a Czech region, on the one hand, and on the other, remnants of German estates from the first land reform, situated for the most part in entirely Czech districts. The transfer of this land into



Czech hands was no very difficult problem ; Czech farmers were re-settled on former German smallholdings, and large estates were shared out among Czech smallholders. Confiscated German forests above 300,000 hectares became the property of the state.

## THE LAND REFORM AND GERMAN CASTLES AND PALACES

Together with German estates in the interior of Bohemia, 524 German castles and palaces were also confiscated, as part of former German landed property in this country. 330 of these buildings are situated in Bohemia and 194 in Moravia-Silesia. Although in the hands of the German nobility since their erection (which often dates back to the Middle Ages), these palaces and country seats were built by Czechs at the behest of their German masters, and stand to-day as witnesses of the serfdom of the native population.

These buildings, often of great intrinsic or historical value, are monuments to alien wealth and luxury amid the misery of the Czech people ; for centuries they were instruments of slavery and exploitation.

Who was to gain control of these historic and artistic monuments? One basic principle was laid down: they were to serve the public, and on no condition were they to become the property of individuals.

Before handing over the majority of these buildings to various public associations, 47 of the finest architectural monuments of all styles and periods, from early mediaeval fortified castles to the late classicism of the turn of the 19th Century, were selected and placed under the direct control of a specially appointed National Cultural Commission. In these exquisite settings, with their parks and formal gardens, often situated in the loveliest parts of the country, the valuables and artistic objects from all the other confiscated castles and palaces are to be assembled and made accessible to the public, thus creating period

museums of art and architecture on a large scale and of a unique kind. This considerable task, planned over a number of years, is already in full swing.

The remaining confiscated castles, palaces and country mansions are to serve the public in a variety of ways. 34 were handed over to schools, 31 to social welfare institutions, 50 have been reserved as recreation centres for workers, 10 for agricultural and industrial research, 21 are to serve for housing purposes and as public offices, 10 were presented to youth organisations, 3 to the Czechoslovak Tourist Club, 1 to the Federation of Workers' Welfare organisations; three castles are to be converted to industrial use, 15 have been retained by the Public Administration of National Forests and Estates, and 43 have been reserved for various cultural purposes. It can be seen that (including the 47 administered by the National Cultural Commission) 268 castles have already been disposed of, and their future use has already been decided on. Of the 256 buildings that remain, a number are in a state of advanced decay or have been more or less severely damaged by the war; while a number are being purposely kept back, so as to make future allocations possible, whenever the cultural, economic and social welfare requirements of the country and the people demand it. War damage is being repaired as speedily and as thoroughly as the state of the buildings permit; all buildings not yet allocated or destined for any particular function are under the control of "National Administrators", whose duty it is to ensure the upkeep of the buildings and the safety of valuables. Altogether it can be said the timely appointment of "National Administrators" on all confiscated castles and palaces has been invaluable in safeguarding property of immense value and reducing loss and damage during the restless revolutionary period to a minimum.



## THE ALLOCATION OF CONFISCATED FORESTS UNDER THE NEW LAND REFORM

As has already been stated, the total area of confiscated German forests and associated lands in the interior of Bohemia amounts to approx. 300,000 hectares and in the border regions to almost 700,000 hectares, i.e. almost 1,000,000 hectares altogether. In accordance with the provisions of the relevant Decrees of the President of the Republic, the Czechoslovak State acquired for the National Forestry and Estate Administration all forest and associated land of over 100 hectares in area; while wooded land of less than 100 hectares, provided it was separate from large tracts of forest, were handed over for distribution to individual communities or groups of villages. This distribution of forest land resulted in the following position at the end of 1947: approximately 840,000 hectares of confiscated German forest land became the property of the National Forestry Administration; 160,000 hectares were distributed to villages; individuals obtained allocations of forest land only in a few exceptional cases of small tracts of forest (1—2 hectares) forming part of an agricultural holding. Originally, of the 1,000,000 hectares of confiscated German forests approx. 700,000 hectares formed part of large German estates, while 300,000 hectares had been in the hands of German farmers.

It can be seen that the Reform works differently in respect of forest land than in respect of agricultural holdings and estates. While in the case of agricultural land and holdings there is an exclusive tendency towards distribution to individual small farmers, and no appropriation by the State or even farming co-operatives are contemplated, in the case of forest land there is a clear tendency towards the nationalisation of large tracts of forest property. Only small and distinct tracts are set aside for allocation to villages, while individuals are excluded from allocations almost completely. The reason for this latter

tendency is to be found in the new and revolutionary attitude taken by the Czechoslovak people towards the problem of forests—forests and woods, in this view, should be the property of the whole nation, as forest land is one of the chief sources of collective wealth, and the gradual transfer of all forests to the hands of the nation is a first essential, if the otherwise inevitable exploitation and consequent irreparable harm to the community are to be avoided.

This attitude found full expression in the Decrees of the President of the Republic on the allocation procedure in respect of confiscated forest land. The immense acreage of German confiscated forests was to a large extent brought under national control, including 840,000 hectares in Bohemia and Moravia, and 260,000 hectares in Slovakia (total, 1,100,000 hectares), and the total national holding thus increased by almost 1.5 million hectares. This step made the National Forestry Administration by far the greatest single owner within the total 5,000,000 hectares of forest in Czechoslovakia. The Second Agricultural Reform thus made possible the modern economic and social principle that all forest land should be transferred from the individual to the nation and that the State or some public authority should administer all forests for the benefit of the whole nation.

Three principles can thus be distinguished in the realisation of the Second Land Reform: the allocation of agricultural holdings to small individual farmers, the nationalisation of forest land, and the opening of castles, palaces and country houses to the general public. These three basic principles are the guiding idea of the Land Reform and the inspiration of the Land Decrees, the net result of almost three years of work on the realisation of this great task.

A comparison of the results of the Second Land Reform, achieved in the period 1945—47, with the achievements of the First Land Reform over a period ten times as long, yields significant conclusions.

The first land reform dragged on for over ten years and



yet remained unfinished, while the new land reform was completed, at least in outline, within the first year of inception. The first land reform left the great estate-owners in full possession of by far the greater part of the land, whereas under the new land reform all land formerly belonging to Germans and collaborators was confiscated without exception. Under the terms of the first land reform Czech smallholders obtained 400,000 hectares of land, under the new land reform their allocation was three times greater. The first land reform gave most of the land to large estate owners and landlords; the new reform explicitly only to agricultural labourers and smallholders. While the average allocation of land per family under the first land reform was 1 hectare, the average allocation per family under the new land reform is almost ten times as large. Under the first land reform the disowned German and Hungarian landlords were entitled to exceedingly generous compensation, while the Czechoslovak State paid nothing for land confiscated under the terms of the new land reform. The small farmers who received allocations of land under the first land reform, had to pay a price that was for the most part far above their means, while charges under the new land reform are minimal, and can be spread in instalments over 18 years, in special cases, reduced or even remitted. The basic price per hectare is calculated at approximately one or two years' harvest, i.e., in practice, one third to one quarter of the actual value of the land and farm buildings.

The decisive factor in the first land reform was the bureaucratic machinery of government, controlled by the reactionary Agrarian Party; the new land reform is being carried out and controlled by Farmers' Committees, democratically elected, and fully supported by the Government's new agricultural policy, and particularly by the Ministry of Agriculture. The first land reform defeated its own ostensible aims especially as regards the distribution of forest property; whereas the new land reform carried out

its clearly established programme of bringing forests, as well as castles and other buildings of general artistic or historical value, under complete public control. The first land reform lost all interest in the new settlers and did nothing to help them during their first hard years; under the terms of the new land reform the Ministry of Agriculture, by means of the National Land Fund especially created for this purpose, assists farmers to gain cheap credits for covering their running losses as well as for investment purposes, provides them with confiscated machinery, equipment and livestock; the services of the Fund try to ease as many as possible of the farmer's hardships: purchase of fodder, seed and cattle, repairs or extensions to damaged, neglected or inadequate land or buildings—and endeavour to ensure that the settlers are able to remain, and to prosper, on their new land.

These, in outline, are the basic differences between the first land reform, planned and carried out in the period between the two world wars, by the "First Republic", under a regime of bourgeois liberalism and under the leadership of the reactionary Agrarian Party; and the new land reform, realised in the spirit of the new agricultural policy, conceived by the Government of the National Front of Czechs and Slovaks, by the new democratic Peoples' Republic, liberated Czechoslovakia.

It may be pointed out, in conclusion, that in the past year 1947 this new agricultural policy was strengthened by three measures of far-reaching significance:

First of these was the settlement of 5,000 families of Volynian Czechs, totalling some 30,000 persons, on the liberated soil of Bohemia, from whence they had emigrated in the last century.

Then came the great and historically decisive task of unifying the farm land in the border regions, covering more than 4,000 registered parishes. Whereas formerly the arable land of a smallholding of an average acreage of some 10 hectares consisted of at least 20 to 30 strips,



often far apart and scattered over the entire area of the parish, today the same farm, after unification, consists of at most three or four large plots, convenient of access and grouped closely together. This technical operation, carried out in the record period of one and a half years, on an area of over a million hectares, means an immense saving of labour, a considerable increase in the area of arable land, greater productivity of the land, and therefore greater prosperity of small holdings, more economic and rational use of agricultural machinery, livestock and manual labour, and, above all, a saving of time and effort that is difficult to assess at its full value, taking into consideration the difficulties with which farmers in this region are faced.

Finally, there is the registration of all land re-distributed under the land reform; this registration was planned and prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture by the end of 1947 and is now being carried out by Registration Courts. Each settler now becomes the registered owner of his land, which will go far to give the new Czech farmers of the border regions a feeling of ownership of their holdings and the whole border regions a sense of security.

To complete this survey, some mention must be made of the progress of land reform in Slovakia. The progress of the new land reform there has been appreciably slower than in Bohemia and Moravia-Silesia, and has shown far less satisfying results. The reason for this is to be found chiefly in the lack of usable holdings, and in the delays caused by the still unrealised transfer and exchange of the Hungarian population.

Altogether, 530,981 hectares of land, belonging to Germans, Hungarians and collaborators, have been confiscated in Slovakia; of this area, 274,017 hectares are arable land and the rest (256,964 hectares), mainly forests. Again, 473,270 hectares were owned by Germans and Hungarians, and 57,714 hectares by collaborators. Several hundred further cases are at present under review, so that the total area of confiscated land may be expected to increase by

a further 50,000 hectares and approach the figure of 600,000 hectares. As regards the results of the resettlement scheme, 202,000 hectares of confiscated land have so far been distributed, 189,000 to small holders and 13,000 to growers and growers' and research or experimental co-operatives. The remainder, which has not so far been distributed at all, is under Government administration and is to be disposed of in the further course of the land reform; much of it is being kept in reserve for Slovak re-immigrants from Hungary, who will be repatriated during the population transfers.

Forest land has already been placed under the authority of the Government and of the public forestry administration.

The delay apparent in the realisation of the land reform in Slovakia is further illustrated by the fact that no registration of holdings has so far taken place there, nor have scattered holdings been unified as is the case in the Bohemian border regions.

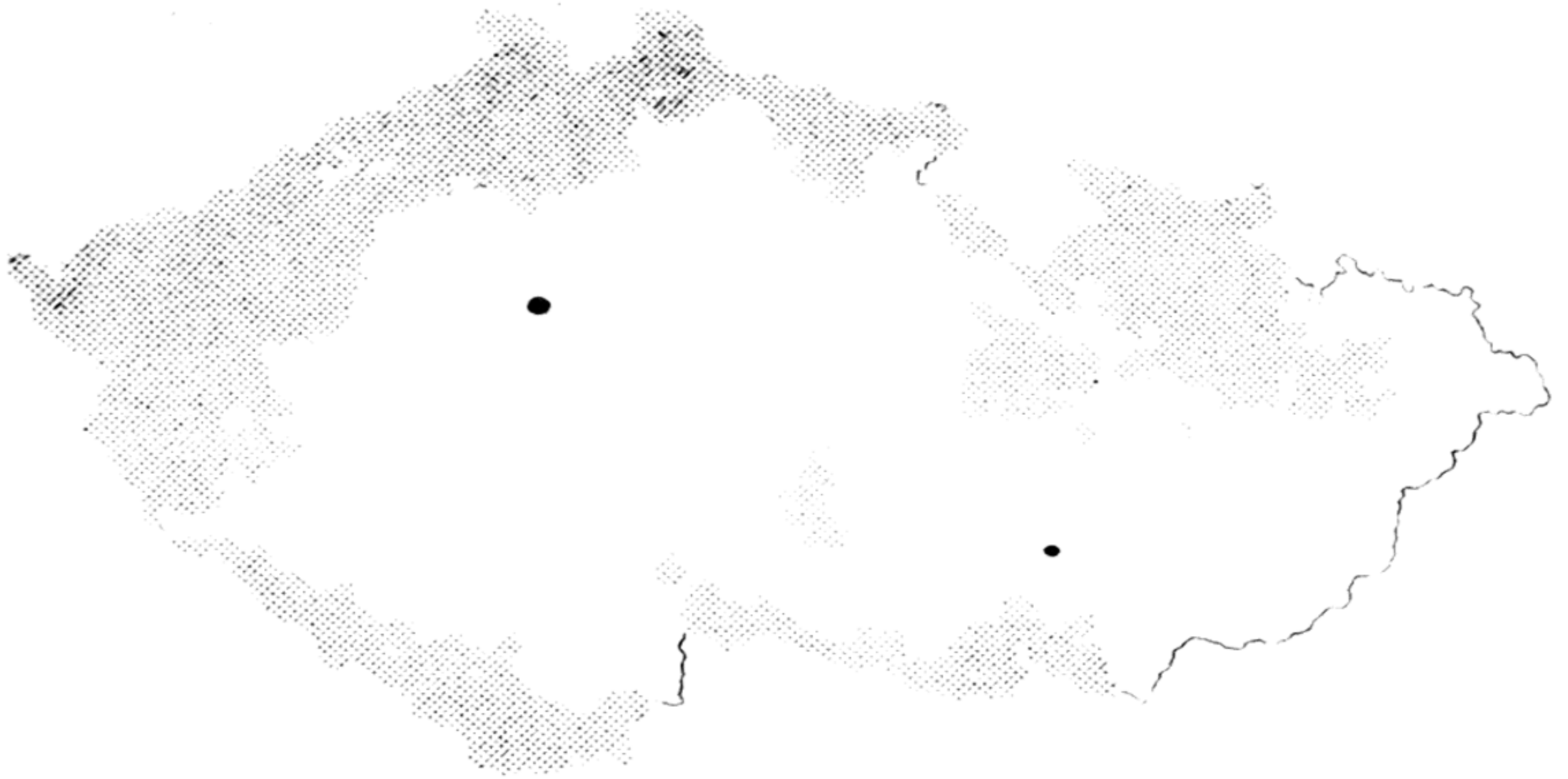
## FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION AND CONCLUSION OF THE LAND REFORM

In the preceding pages of this analysis an outline has been given of the two stages of land reform in Czechoslovakia:

1. The first, incomplete and mutilated land reform, planned and partly put into practice in the period 1919—39;
2. The period of national revolution and the revolutionary period of the new land reform, covering the period 1945 to 1947, the chief objective of which was to give back the land of liberated Czechoslovakia to its rightful owners by confiscation of the holdings of Germans, Hungarians and collaborators.

The chief result of the implementation of land reform up to the present is the liquidation of all German holdings in Bohemia and Moravia-Silesia and their return to Czech



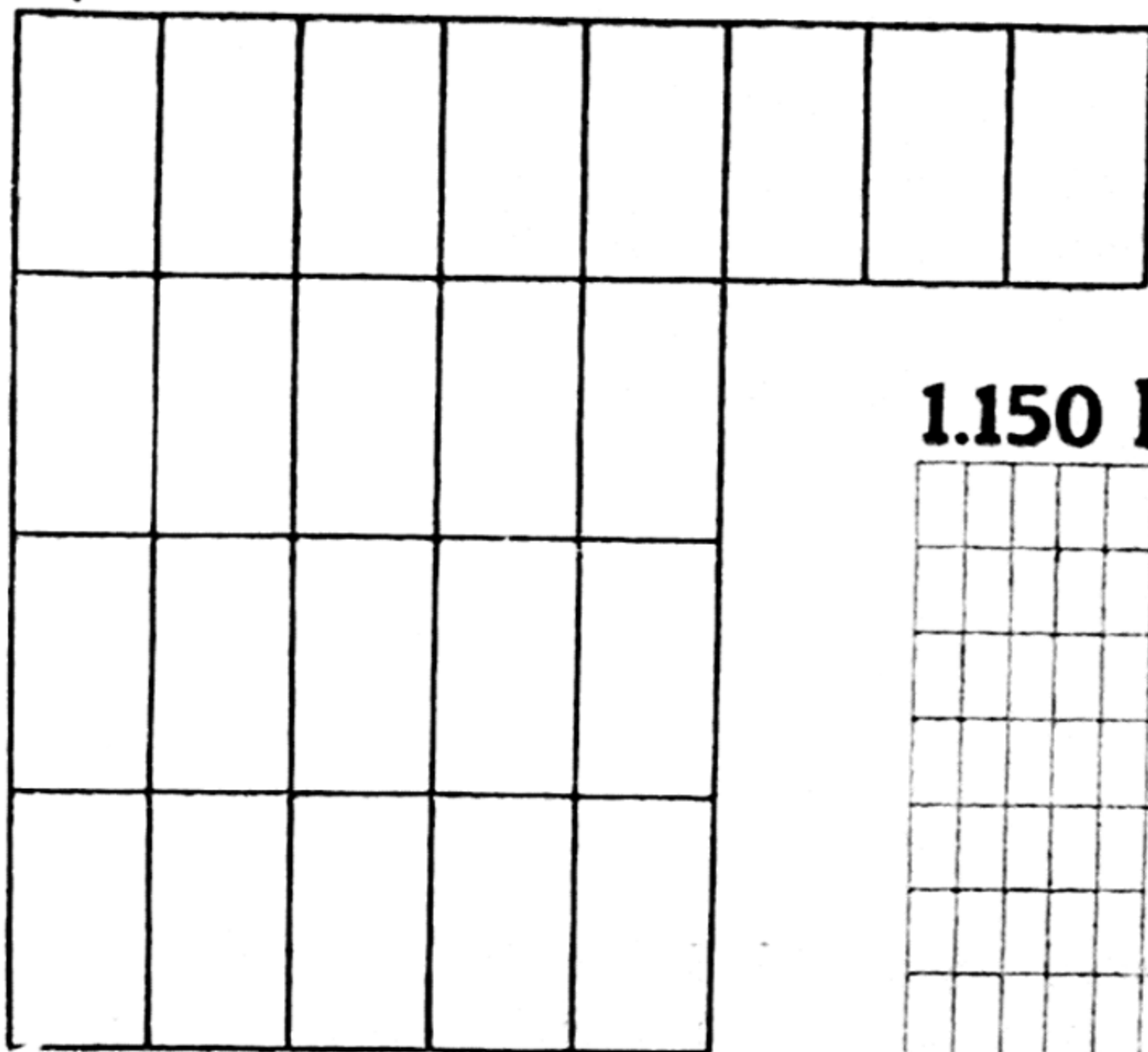


Map showing the frontier parts of Bohemia formerly inhabited by Germans and Czechs, wherefrom the transfer of the Germans was carried out. They were replaced by Czech peasants

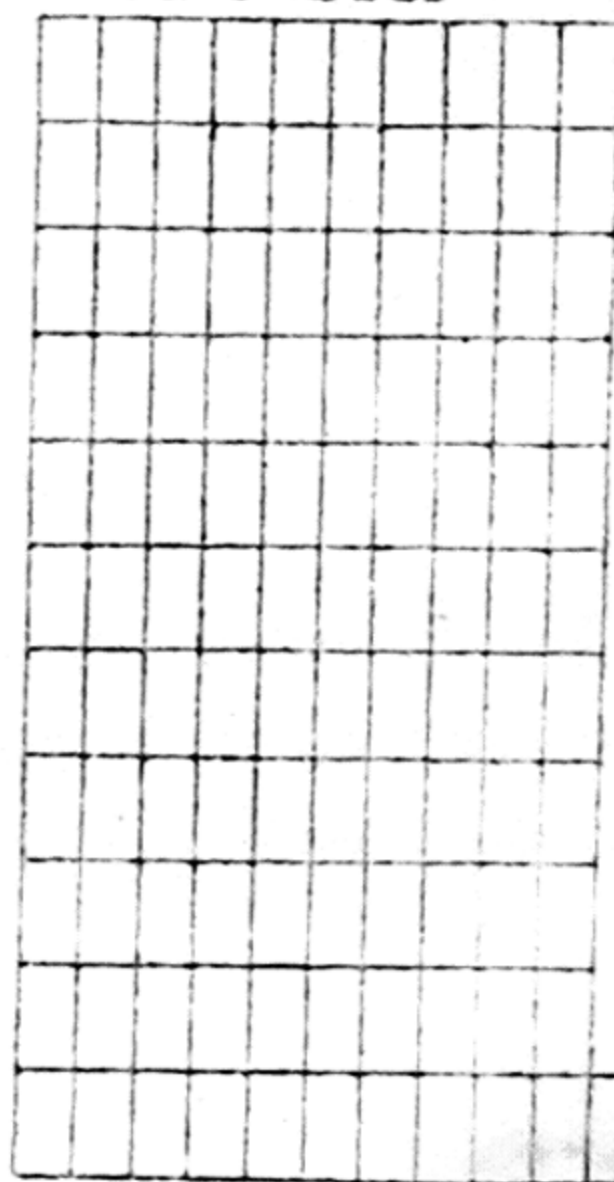
## **The First Land Reform (1919 – 38):**

2,300,000 ha of land remained in the hands of German and Hungarian landlords, i.e. 1,150 ha each

**2,300.000 ha**



**1.150 ha**

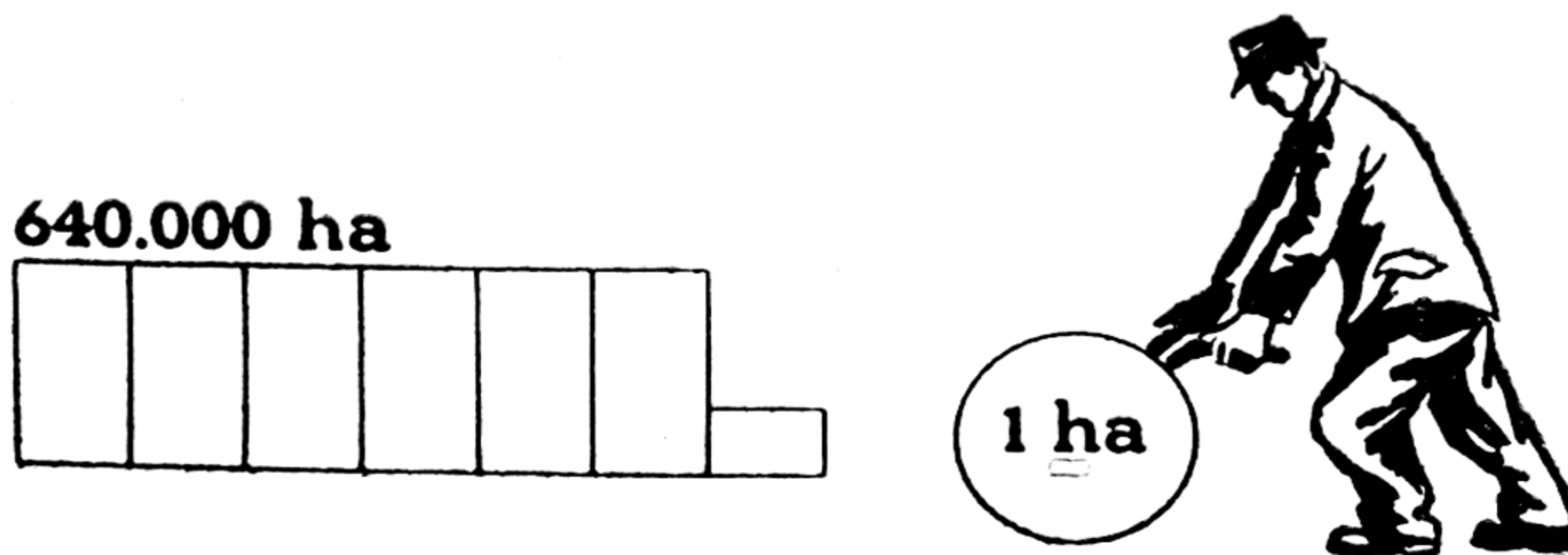




200,000 ha of land were kept for the remaining 2,000 landlords, i.e. 100 ha each

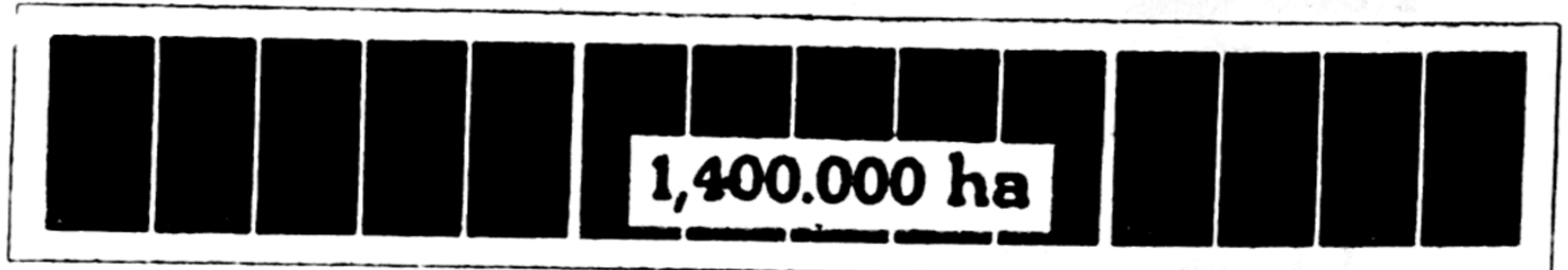


Only 640,000 ha of land were left over for the small peasants, i.e. 1 ha for each family



## THE NEW LAND REFORM:

In Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia 1,400,000 ha of land were confiscated in the frontier parts



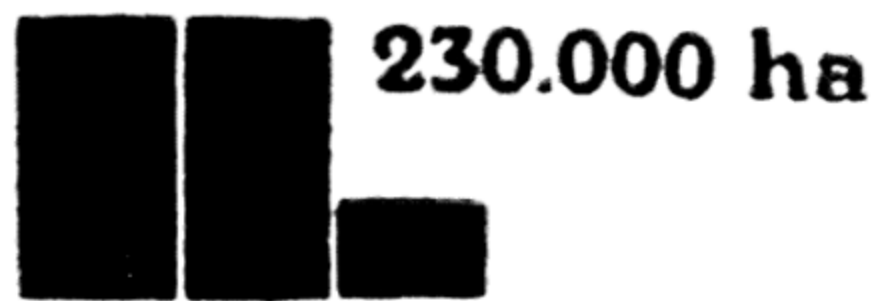
1,040,000 ha were distributed amongst different applicants, of them 1,005,000 ha amongst peasants transferred to these parts, i. e. for 125,000 families

1,040.000 ha



35,000 ha of building sites and gardens for 30,000 applicants



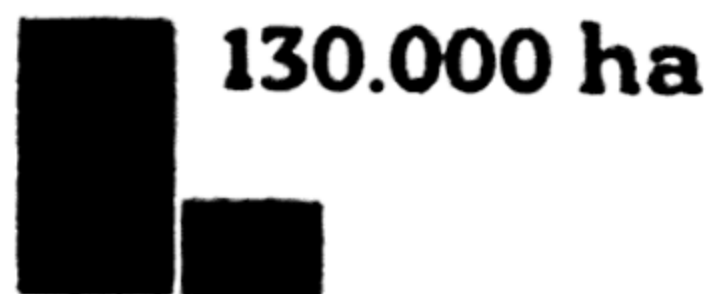


230,000 ha agricultural land

50,000 ha for afforestation

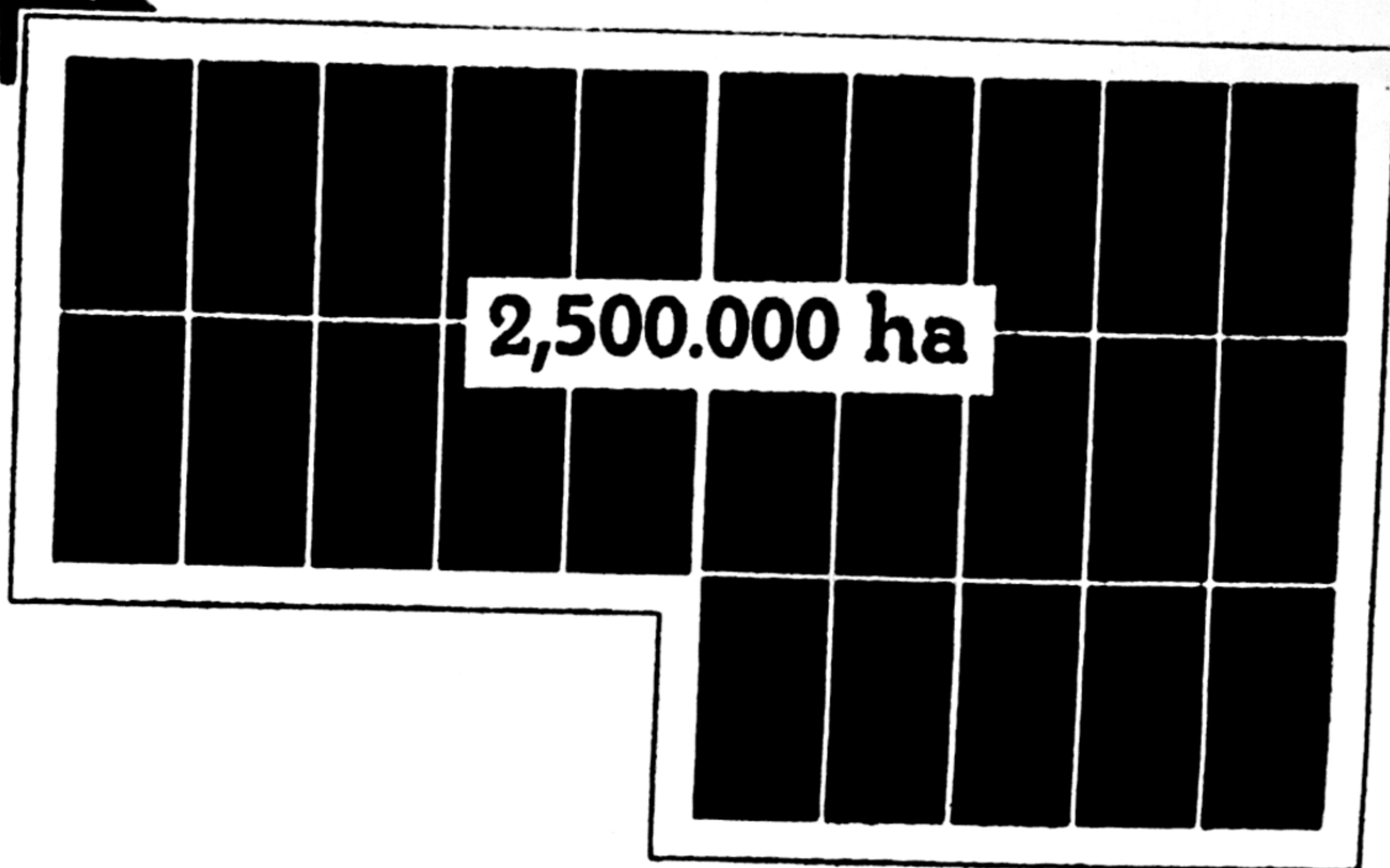
45,000 ha in reserve

105,000 ha for public purposes



130,000 ha agricultural land for pasture co-operatives

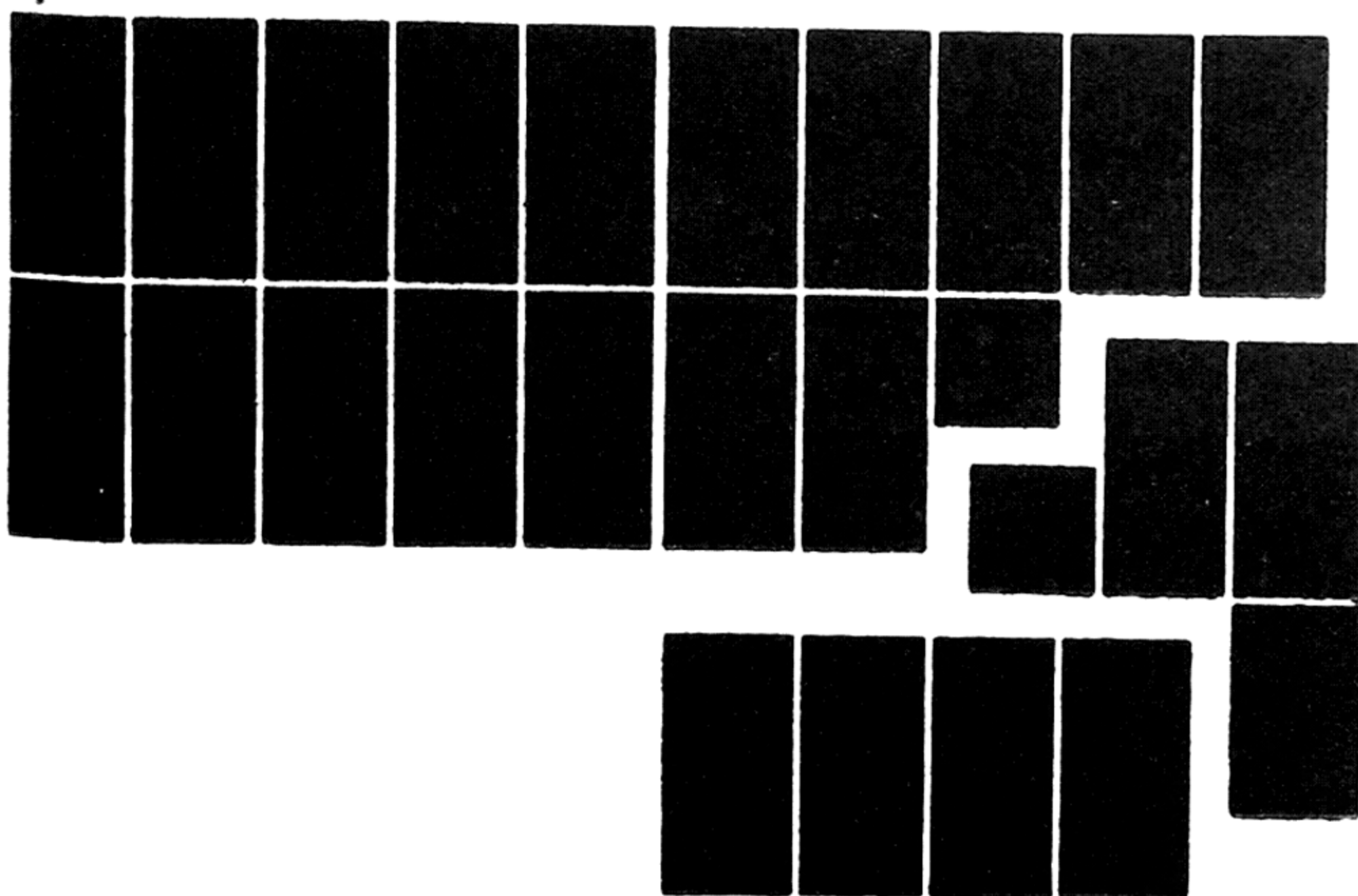
During the first land reform (1918 – 38), 2,500,000 ha of pure forest land were confiscated





of that 1,750,000 ha remained in the hands of the German and Hungarian landlords.

**1,750.000 ha**



**350.000 ha**

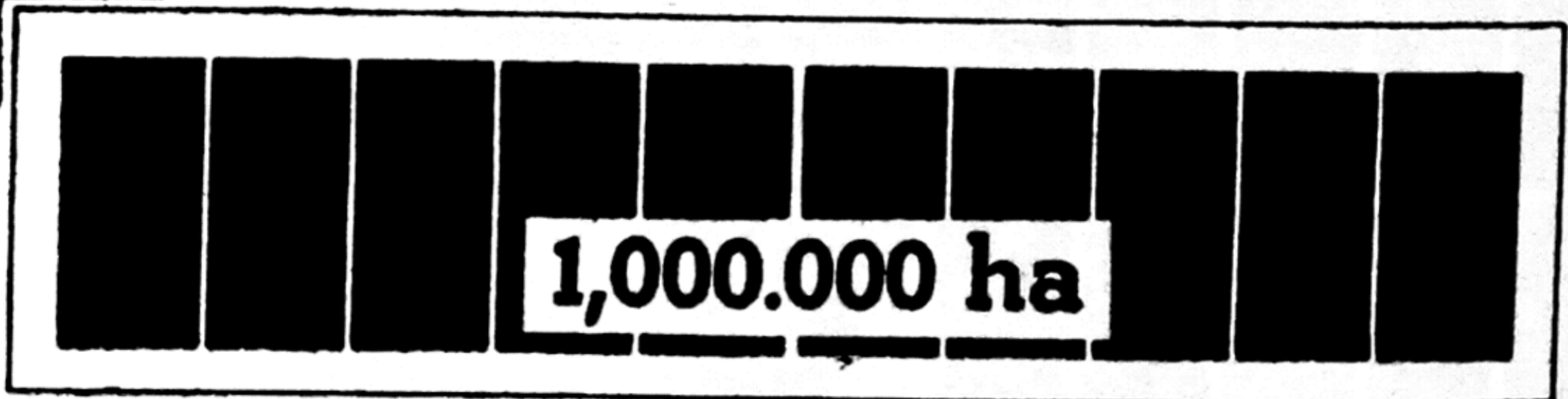
**400.000 ha**

The biggest part of the 350,000 ha went into the hands of land speculators, and only a small part was taken over by villages and townships

400,000 ha were taken over by the State

Within the new land reform:

1,000,000 ha pure forest land were confiscated



700 in the frontier parts

300,000 ha inland

840,000 ha - State property

**840.000 ha**



160,000 ha for the villages and townships

Nothing was left in the hands of the former landlords.



ownership; this applies to all manner and size of holdings, from the largest estates down to the smallest holding. In Slovakia Hungarian holdings were affected to a limited extent and were confiscated chiefly where the owners had proved themselves active enemies of the Slovak people.

The confiscation of German and Hungarian holdings helped in many ways to put right the injustice done by the first, incomplete Land Reform of 1919—39. The large estates which were brought under national administration in 1919 and later escaped confiscation, were for the most part the property of the German and Hungarian nobility. After the liberation of Czechoslovakia and in the course of the new Land Reform, most of these estates were duly confiscated. We can safely say that the problem of German ownership of land has been solved completely in Bohemia and Moravia-Silesia, and the problems raised by the Hungarian ownership of land in Slovakia have been settled to a large extent. An exception is formed by German and Hungarian Church holdings; no final conclusion has yet been reached with regard to these estates.

The first stage of the new Land Reform is thus at an end, having achieved its aims; it only remains to deal with the problem of large estates in the hands of Czech and Slovak landlords.

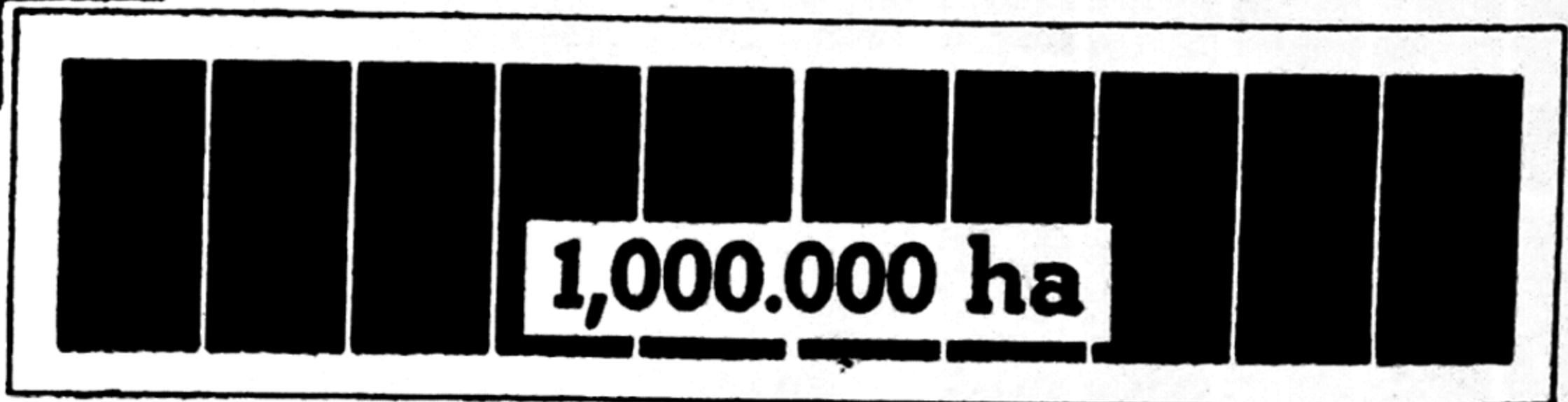
This problem is to be approached on the basis of two legislative provisions, specially passed for this purpose. The final conclusion of the task will require two distinct measures, which will be carried out in separate stages; these will bring land reform in Czechoslovakia to a conclusion.

The first of these measures is the "Revision of the Czechoslovak First Land Reform", based on Act 142/11. 7. 1947; the provisions of this Act are to be carried out during 1948, i.e., before the end of the second year of the Two-Year Plan for Agriculture.

It will be the chief task of this measure to examine and revise the implementation of the first land reform on the

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basis of the laws which govern it, and to annul and reverse all illegal and ambiguous decisions made in connection therewith. In practice this means simply that each Czech or Slovak landowner, whose property fell due for redistribution in 1919 and who managed to evade the provisions of the Act—in many cases this happened with property of 10,000, 14,000 or even 50,000 hectares—will under the terms of the first land reform be permitted to retain only 250 hectares of arable and forest land; the size of residuary estates, which were brought into being artificially at the expense of smallholders' entitlements and valid applications for land, will be reduced everywhere to 50 hectares. This measure will remedy at least the most glaring injustices left by the first land reform, and at the same time effectively reduce Czech and Slovak residuary estates and large private holdings. It must, however, be borne in mind that the Revision Bill of 1947 empowers the present Government only to an examination of the implementation of the first land reform, carried out under the terms of the original Reform Bill of 1919, the provisions of which were largely ignored in the implementation of the Reform, and will now, during the revision, be observed.

It should be borne in mind, however, that the scope of the revision will not be as wide as that of the original reform, which was designed to deal with the immense private holdings of pre-war days, the total area of which amounted to 2,300,000 hectares up to 1945; the German and Hungarian estates which made up the greater part of these holdings have since been liquidated by confiscation after the war. There remain, however, the holdings of Czech and Slovak landowners, estimated at some 7—800,000 hectares, and consisting for the most part of residuary estates which escaped the provisions of the first reform and which will now be dealt with as was originally planned under the terms of the original Act.

An exception to this is the estate of Adolf Schwarzenberg, consisting of 50,000 hectares of arable and forest



land; this has been nationalised, in full, under the terms of a special Bill (No. 143/Sb.—of July 10, 1947), and is now the property of the Province of Bohemia.

The second measure in this programme, which will bring the new land reform to a conclusion, is to be contained in a Bill specifying the upper permissible limit of land ownership in Czechoslovakia.

The draft of this Bill was already prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture in the autumn of 1947 and is on the legislation schedule for discussion by Parliament early in 1948. The measures contained in this Bill after it becomes law, and the appropriate detailed provisions and regulations have been worked out, are to be implemented before the end of 1948.

The Bill is based on two principles:

1. No private persons within the territory of the Czechoslovak Republic may own more than 50 hectares of land. All holdings in excess of this upper limit will be purchased by the State at current prices and used for distribution to smallholders. This provision applies to all individual holdings; whenever, in the future, any individual holding exceeds the stipulated limit, the excess acreage will be purchased and re-distributed automatically. It will be obvious that the large holdings and residuary estates dealt with by the Revision Act are equally subject to this limitation; though under the Revision Act (i.e., in accordance with the First Land Reform of 1919) they will be permitted an upper limit of 250 hectares, this will be a purely temporary measure, until the new Bill comes into force.

This upper limit does not, however, apply to land owned by the State, by the Provincial district and parish administrations, by farming and other co-operatives, or by other public or co-operative organisations.

2. All holdings will be purchased at current prices and used for re-distribution, without regard to size, unless the owner can show that he is a farmer working his own land, or can produce such valid reasons as will be specified in

the Bill. This provision is intended to liquidate all holdings from which the owner draws unearned income, and which thus enable him to exploit smallholders and tenants, and to derive profit from the work of others. Holdings which do not exceed 1 hectare will be exempted. The total area of land in Czechoslovakia which is not owner-farmed, but leased to tenants at exorbitant rents, enabling the owners to draw unearned incomes, is estimated to exceed 500,000 hectares, not including a somewhat smaller area of forest land.

These two legislative measures—the revision of the First Land Reform and the provision of an upper permissible limit of holdings—will write the last chapter of land reform in Czechoslovakia. These measures are expected to be carried out in the very near future.

The position of land ownership in Czechoslovakia on completion of the land reform can be summarised as follows:

German holdings will have disappeared completely and Hungarian holdings to a very great extent;

Czech and Slovak holdings will be limited to 50 hectares per individual owner or family;

all arable land not farmed by the owner himself, irrespective of size, will be purchased by the State and redistributed to smallholders.

All this means, in short, the end of German and Hungarian ownership on Czech and Slovak soil, and the end of land ownership for persons who have betrayed their country to the enemy at a time of national peril. It means further the end of the feudal estates of the nobility, and the freezing of individual holdings at an area of 50 hectares—providing the owner himself farms the land. It means finally that the “landed” class of property owners and rentiers will no longer be able to exploit their tenants and farm—labourers, and live on the proceeds of the labour of others.

It means the implementation of the fundamental require-



ment of economic and social justice: that the land should belong to those and only to those who till it with their own labour.

Czechoslovakia arrived at the implementation of this principle, which triumphed in 1917 in the USSR, and which is the basis of the agricultural reforms being carried out at present in Poland, Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary, as well as in the Soviet Zone of Germany, along an independent and characteristic, economic, social and national road. Therefore, land reform in Czechoslovakia is not a copy or imitation of the agricultural reform programme carried out in any other country, even though the final national, economic and social aim in all these movements, especially in the Slav countries, is the same.

Land, which in the course of the new land reform has been, or will be, taken away from Germans, Hungarians and collaborators on the one hand, and from Czech and Slovak landowners, and all those who draw unearned incomes from the land, on the other, does not become the property of the State—i.e., it is not socialised; nor does it become the property of the nation—i.e., it is not nationalised; nor is there any attempt to impose collective farming—i.e., it is not collectivised. The land is re-distributed among individual farmers, who hold it, not on lease or loan from the State, but as their own private property. Taken from individuals in the private production sector, this land remains still within the private production sector, even after the land reform has been carried out; but instead of a small number of large landowners, drawing unearned wealth from the labour of their tenants, there will be a large variety of medium sized holdings, farmed by the owner and his family.

Thus the Czechoslovak land reform cannot be called a socialist reform, although there can be no doubt that it represents a revolutionary innovation in the development of the ownership of land. While retaining the principle of the individual ownership of land, it endeavours to with-

draw this ownership from the landlords, the holders of huge estates and the speculators in real estate, and on the land thus gained it endeavours to create a decent and healthy existence for hundreds of thousands of labourers, tenants and smallholders.

The free Czech and Slovak farmer thus becomes the master of the liberated land, the equal and brother of all workers of the hand or brain, workers in mines, factories, workshops and offices, laboratories and studios. Taken in this sense, land reform is an important milestone in the evolution of this country, the evolution from a bourgeois democracy to the people's democracy of today, growing ever stronger, consolidating itself against all attacks from within or without.

The new Constitution of the Czechoslovak Republic, which will be ratified by Parliament even before the summer of this year, will contain a provision which emerges from this analysis as inevitable: that on the one hand a holding of 50 hectares is the largest permissible holding for any individual in this country, and that even a smaller holding cannot be owned by anyone who does not work in himself—but that, on the other hand, individual ownership up to 50 hectares is the inviolable right of every farmer, guaranteed by the Constitution.



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